

Honorable Chairman and members of the committee:

My name is Becky Stockton and I reside in Helena, Montana. I am fully in support of HB 404 and want to thank Representative Rick Jore for bringing this issue to your attention.

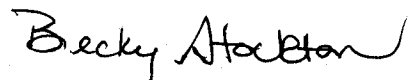
I feel that having mandatory compulsory attendance laws have hindered educating our children and should be abolished. Our children were learning well before our children and we, the parents had to abide to mandatory compulsory attendance laws. Take for example: our children learned to rollover, crawl, walk, talk, and dress and feed themselves, have manners and respect for others, knew their colors, numbers, write their names and etc. before entering the public school. This was all done without the help of the public schools; in fact, we, the parents were their sole educator. Then when they started formal public school, they even learned without the teachers after school hours, on weekends, during holidays and summer vacations without the school dictating what the student should learn or not. I spent two years, every day in the classroom with our children and saw how much time was wasted and knew that there was a better way to educate our children, so my husband and I decided to pull our children out and educated them at home. We, the parent wanted the best education possible for our children, so I did a lot of research as to what curriculum would best fit each child. We were ecstatic to see how excited the children were to learn. I, a parent, even taught my daughter to read and it was very easy. She is such a bookworm today, that sometimes I have to tell her to put her book away to get other things done.

We home schooled our son until the 8th grade. Ninth grade he attended a private Christian High School, then the next year we enrolled him into American School, which is a correspondence High School. Also during this time, our son, Tyler took one class at the local public high school here in Helena. The class was called Cisco computer networking. He was an excellent student and received an "A" in the class. But there was one situation that occurred that has bothered us since. Prior to this class our son was accepted to a summer internship at the Montana Science Institute. He spent everyday, 8 to 5pm. five days a week for three months doing a science experiment. Since the internship was free, his only requirement was to attend two science fairs and one symposium and of course these events occurred during the public school year. When it was time for Tyler to go to the Science Symposium he needed to miss two days of school. Tyler asked permission from his teacher to miss class and she said it was ok. But when our son informed the administration staff, they said that it would be counted as an inexcusable absence because the school was not involved in doing this learning event. After many phone calls and a personal visit by my husband, that inexcusable absent was finally changed. This episode made us realize that the school was not interested in our son's education. They were actually punishing him for striving to learn more. But as the result of how the funding system works in this state, the administration staff are more focused on the attendance of that student than on the education of that student. This is where mandatory compulsory attendance fails.

Educating a child can come from many different avenues. But by having mandatory compulsory attendance laws does not prove or show that it is the best method for the child to learn. The public schools should be striving to push students to their highest educational potential instead of limiting them by adhering to attendance laws.

Today, I ask the committee to please vote yes to HB 404.

Becky Stockton
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A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Becky Stockton". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the printed contact information.